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4-2008

## Governor Blunt's Missouri Feral Hog Task Force: Engaging State and Federal Agencies with Private Stakeholders

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Martensen, Rex, "Governor Blunt's Missouri Feral Hog Task Force: Engaging State and Federal Agencies with Private Stakeholders" (2008). *National Conference on Feral Hogs*. 4.

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## **GOVERNOR BLUNT'S MISSOURI FERAL HOG TASK FORCE: Engaging State and Federal Agencies with Private Stakeholders**

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**ABSTRACT:** Feral hogs are a serious concern for Missouri. Their rooting and feeding behavior contributes to soil erosion, reduced water quality, and damage to agricultural lands including cropland, pasture and hayfields. Feral hogs are a direct threat to natural resources and native wildlife, including endangered plants and animals. The spread of disease by feral hogs is another major concern and there is potential for these diseases to jeopardize people, pets and livestock and, in particular, the private pork industry in Missouri.

By Executive Order, Governor Matt Blunt created a director/administrator level, multi-agency task force to address the issues associated with feral hogs. The ten-member task force was co-chaired by the directors of the Departments of Agriculture and Conservation. Other members included the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Health and Senior Services, United States Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Conservation Federation of Missouri, Missouri Farm Bureau, MFA Incorporated, Missouri Forest Products Association, and the Missouri Pork Association. The task force was instructed to complete the following:

1. Develop a public educational message regarding the negative impacts associated with feral hogs.
2. Review existing state laws/regulations regarding the illegal release of hogs and propose needed changes.
3. Develop and implement voluntary disease testing standards for feral hogs killed in Missouri.
4. Establish a contingency plan to be followed if disease(s) posing significant threats to human, livestock, and/or wildlife populations are documented in Missouri.
5. Implement aggressive proactive efforts to remove all feral hog populations from public lands and encourage private landowners to concurrently remove feral hogs from their property.
6. Expand regulatory and enforcement efforts aimed at eliminating sources (e.g., escaped animals from traditional hog operations, dumped pets, and illegal releases by individuals desiring to establish populations) of feral hogs.

The task force was also instructed to complete a report outlining steps to be taken to implement/address the above items, the role of each state agency, anticipated costs of implementation, and associated benefits to the citizens and natural resources of Missouri.

This presentation will outline and highlight the process of this special, Governor appointed task force and the issues that surfaced during discussions as we moved toward an overall plan. Pending Governor approval, more details concerning the results of the task force will also be discussed.

**KEY WORDS:** conservation initiative, feral hog, inter-agency cooperation, Missouri